

114TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

S. 1555

AN ACT

To award a Congressional Gold Medal, collectively, to the Filipino veterans of World War II, in recognition of the dedicated service of the veterans during World War II.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

1 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

2 This Act may be cited as the “Filipino Veterans of
3 World War II Congressional Gold Medal Act of 2015”.

4 **SEC. 2. FINDINGS.**

5 Congress finds the following:

6 (1) The First Philippine Republic was founded
7 as a result of the Spanish-American War in which
8 Filipino revolutionaries and the United States
9 Armed Forces fought to overthrow Spanish colonial
10 rule. On June 12, 1898, Filipinos declared the Phil-
11ippines to be an independent and sovereign nation.
12 The Treaty of Paris negotiated between the United
13 States and Spain ignored this declaration of inde-
14pendence, and the United States paid Spain
15 \$20,000,000 to cede control of the Philippines to the
16 United States. Filipino nationalists who sought inde-
17pendence rather than a change in colonial rulers
18 clashed with forces of the United States in the Is-
19lands. The Philippine-American War, which officially
20 lasted for 3 years from 1899 to 1902, led to the es-
21tablishment of the United States civil government in
22 the Philippines.

23 (2) In 1901, units of Filipino soldiers who
24 fought for the United States against the nationalist
25 insurrection were formally incorporated into the
26 United States Army as the Philippine Scouts.

1 (3) In 1934, the Philippine Independence Act
2 (Public Law 73–127; 48 Stat. 456) established a
3 timetable for ending colonial rule of the United
4 States. Between 1934 and Philippine independence
5 in 1946, the United States retained sovereignty over
6 Philippine foreign policy and reserved the right to
7 call Filipinos into the service of the United States
8 Armed Forces.

9 (4) On December 21 1935, President of the
10 Philippine Commonwealth, Manuel Quezon, signed
11 the National Defense Act, passed by the Philippine
12 Assembly. General Douglas MacArthur set upon the
13 task of creating an independent army in the Phil-
14 ippines, consisting of a small regular force, the Phil-
15 ippine Constabulary, a police force created during
16 the colonial period of the United States, and reserv-
17 ists. By July 1941, the Philippine army had 130,000
18 reservists and 6,000 officers.

19 (5) On July 26, 1941, as tensions with Japan
20 rose in the Pacific, President Franklin D. Roosevelt
21 used his authority vested in the Constitution of the
22 United States and the Philippine Independence Act
23 to “call into service of the United States . . . all of
24 the organized military forces of the Government of
25 the Philippines.” On July 27th, 1941, in accordance

1 with a War Department directive received a day ear-
2 lier, the United States Forces in the Far East
3 (USAFFE) was established, and Manila was des-
4 ignated as the command headquarters. Commander
5 of the USAFFE, General Douglas MacArthur,
6 planned to absorb the entire Philippine army into
7 the USAFFE in phases. The first phase, which
8 began on September 1, 1941, included 25,000 men
9 and 4,000 officers.

10 (6) Filipinos who served in the USAFFE in-
11 cluded—

12 (A) the Philippine Scouts, who comprised
13 half of the 22,532 soldiers in the Philippine De-
14 partment, or United States Army garrison sta-
15 tioned in the Islands at the start of the war;

16 (B) the Philippine Commonwealth Army;

17 (C) the new Philippine Scouts, or Filipinos
18 who volunteered to serve with the United States
19 Army when the United States Armed Forces re-
20 turned to the island;

21 (D) Filipino civilians who volunteered to
22 serve in the United States Armed Forces in
23 1945 and 1946, and who became “attached” to
24 various units of the United States Army; and

1 (E) the “Guerrilla Services” who had
2 fought behind enemy lines throughout the war.

3 (7) Even after hostilities ceased, wartime serv-
4 ice of the new Philippine Scouts continued as a mat-
5 ter of law until the end of 1946, and the force
6 gradually disbanded until it was disestablished in
7 1950.

8 (8) On December 8th, 1941, not even 24 hours
9 after the bombing of Pearl Harbor, Japanese Impe-
10 rial forces attacked bases of the United States Army
11 in the Philippines.

12 (9) In the spring of 1942, the Japanese 14th
13 Army overran the Bataan Peninsula, and, after a
14 heroic but futile defense, more than 78,000 members
15 of the United States Armed Forces were captured,
16 specifically 66,000 Filipinos and 12,000 service
17 members from the United States. The Japanese
18 transferred the captured soldiers from Bataan to
19 Camp O’Donnell, in what is now known as the infa-
20 mous Bataan Death March. Forced to march the
21 70-mile distance in 1 week, without adequate food,
22 water, or medicine, nearly 700 members of the
23 United States Armed Forces and an estimated 6,000
24 to 10,000 Filipinos perished during the journey.

(10) After the fall of the Bataan Peninsula, the Japanese Army turned its sights on Corregidor. The estimated forces in defense of Corregidor totaled 13,000, and were comprised of members of the United States Armed Forces and Filipino troops. Of this number, 800 were killed, 1,000 were wounded, and 11,000 were captured and forced to march through the city of Manila, after which the captured troops were distributed to various POW camps. The rest of the captured troops escaped to organize or join an underground guerrilla army.

(11) Even before the fall of Corregidor, Philippine resistance, in the form of guerrilla armies, began to wage warfare on the Japanese invaders. Guerrilla armies, from Northern Luzon to Mindanao—

(A) raided Japanese camps, stealing weapons and supplies;

(B) sabotaged and ambushed Japanese troops on the move; and

(C) with little weaponry, and severely out-matched in numbers, began to extract victories.

(12) Japanese intelligence reports reveal that from the time the Japanese invaded until the return of the United States Armed Forces in the summer

1 of 1944, an estimated 300,000 Filipinos continued
2 to fight against Japanese forces. Filipino resistance
3 against the Japanese was so strong that, in 1942,
4 the Imperial Army formed the Morista Butai, a unit
5 designated to suppress guerrillas.

6 (13) Because Philippine guerrillas worked to re-
7 store communication with United States forces in
8 the Pacific, General MacArthur was able to use the
9 guerrillas in advance of a conventional operation and
10 provided the headquarters of General MacArthur
11 with valuable information. Guerrillas captured and
12 transmitted to the headquarters of General Mac-
13 Arthur Japanese naval plans for the Central Pacific,
14 including defense plans for the Mariana Islands. In-
15 telligence derived from guerrillas relating to aircraft,
16 ship, and troop movements allowed for Allied forces
17 to attack Japanese supply lines and guerrillas and
18 even directed United States submarines where to
19 land agents and cargo on the Philippine coast.

20 (14) On December 20, 1941, President Roo-
21 sevelt signed the Selective Training and Service
22 Amendments Act (Public Law 77-360; 55 Stat.
23 844) which, among other things, allowed Filipinos in
24 the United States to enlist in the United States
25 Armed Forces. In February 1942, President Roo-

1 sevelt issued the Second War Powers Act (Public
2 Law 77-507; 56 Stat. 176), promising a simplified
3 naturalization process for Filipinos who served in
4 the United States Armed Forces. Subsequently,
5 16,000 Filipinos in California alone decided to en-
6 list.

7 (15) The mobilization of forces included the ac-
8 tivation and assumption of command of the First
9 Filipino Infantry Battalion on April 1, 1942, at
10 Camp San Luis Obispo, California. Orders were
11 issued to activate the First Filipino Infantry Regi-
12 ment and Band at Salinas, California, effective July
13 13, 1942. The activation of the Second Filipino In-
14 fantry Regiment occurred at Fort Ord, California,
15 on November 21, 1942. Nearly 9,000 Filipinos and
16 Filipino Americans fought in the United States
17 Army 1st and 2nd Filipino Infantry Regiments.

18 (16) Soldiers of the 1st and 2nd Infantry Regi-
19 ments participated in the bloody combat and mop-
20 up operations at New Guinea, Leyte, Samar, Luzon,
21 and the Southern Philippines. In 1943, 800 men
22 were selected from the 1st and 2nd Regiments and
23 shipped to Australia to receive training in intel-
24 ligence gathering, sabotage, and demolition. Reorga-
25 nized as part of the 1st Reconnaissance Battalion,

1 this group was sent to the Philippines to coordinate
2 with major guerrilla armies in the Islands. Members
3 of the 1st Regiment were also attached to the
4 United States 6th Army “Alamo Scouts”, a recon-
5 naissance group that traveled 30 miles behind enemy
6 lines to free Allied prisoners from the Cabanatuan
7 death camp on January 30, 1945. In addition, in
8 1945, according to the 441st Counter Intelligence
9 Unit of the United States Armed Forces, Philippine
10 guerrillas provided “very important information and
11 sketches of enemy positions and installations” for
12 the liberation of the Santo Tomas prisoner of war
13 camp, an event that made front page news across
14 the United States.

15 (17) In March 1944, members of the 2nd Fili-
16 pino Infantry Regiment were selected for special as-
17 signments, including intelligence missions, and reor-
18 ganized as the 2nd Filipino Infantry Battalion (Sepa-
19 arate). The 2nd Filipino Infantry Battalion (Sepa-
20 arate) contributed to mop-up operations as a civil af-
21 fairs unit.

22 (18) Filipinos participated in the war out of na-
23 tional pride, as well as out of a commitment to the
24 Allied forces struggle against fascism. 57,000 Fili-
25 pinos in uniform died in the war effort. Estimates

1 of civilian deaths range from 700,000 to upwards of
2 1,000,000, or between 4.38 to 6.25 percent of the
3 prewar population of 16,000,000.

4 (19) Because Filipinos who served in the Com-
5 monwealth Army of the Philippines were originally
6 considered a part of the Allied struggle, the military
7 order issued by President Roosevelt on July 26,
8 1941, stated that Filipinos who served in the Com-
9 monwealth Army of the Philippines were entitled to
10 full veterans benefits. The guarantee to pay back the
11 service of Filipinos through veterans benefits was re-
12 versed by the Rescission Acts of 1946 (Public Laws
13 79–301 and 79–391; 60 Stat. 6 and 60 Stat. 221),
14 which deemed that the wartime service of the Com-
15 monwealth Army of the Philippines and the new
16 Philippine Scouts was not considered active and,
17 therefore, did not qualify for benefits.

18 (20) The loyal and valiant Filipino Veterans of
19 World War II fought, suffered, and, in many in-
20 stances, died in the same manner and under the
21 same commander as other members of the United
22 States Armed Forces during World War II.

23 (21) The Filipino Veterans of World War II
24 fought alongside, and as an integral part of, the
25 United States Armed Forces. The Philippines re-

1 mained a territory of the United States for the dura-
2 tion of the war and, accordingly, the United States
3 maintained sovereignty over Philippine foreign rela-
4 tions, including Philippine laws enacted by the Phil-
5 ippine Government. Filipinos who fought in the Phil-
6 ippines were not only defending or fighting for the
7 Philippines, but also defending, and ultimately liber-
8 ating, sovereign territory held by the United States
9 Government.

10 (22) The United States remains forever in-
11 debted to the bravery, valor, and dedication that the
12 Filipino Veterans of World War II displayed. Their
13 commitment and sacrifice demonstrates a highly un-
14 common and commendable sense of patriotism and
15 honor.

16 **SEC. 3. DEFINITIONS.**

17 In this Act—

18 (a) the term “Filipino Veterans of World War II”
19 includes any individual who served—

20 (1) honorably at any time during the period be-
21 ginning on July 26, 1941, and ending on December
22 31, 1946;

23 (2) in an active-duty status under the command
24 of the United States Armed Forces in the Far East;
25 and

1 (3)(A) within the Philippine Commonwealth
2 Army, the Philippine Scouts, the Philippine Con-
3 stabulary, Recognized Guerrilla units, the New Phil-
4 ippine Scouts, the First Filipino Infantry Regiment,
5 the Second Filipino Infantry Battalion (Separate),
6 or the First Reconnaissance Battalion; or

7 (B) commanding or serving in a unit described
8 in paragraph (3)(A) as a United States military offi-
9 cer or enlisted soldier; and

10 (b) the term “Secretary” means the Secretary of the
11 Treasury.

12 **SEC. 4. CONGRESSIONAL GOLD MEDAL.**

13 (a) AWARD AUTHORIZED.—The President pro tem-
14 pore of the Senate and the Speaker of the House of Rep-
15 resentatives shall make appropriate arrangements for the
16 award, on behalf of Congress, of a single gold medal of
17 appropriate design to the Filipino Veterans of World War
18 II in recognition of the dedicated service of the veterans
19 during World War II.

20 (b) DESIGN AND STRIKING.—For the purposes of the
21 award referred to in subsection (a), the Secretary shall
22 strike the Gold Medal with suitable emblems, devices, and
23 inscriptions, to be determined by the Secretary.

24 (c) SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION.—

1 (1) IN GENERAL.—Following the award of the
2 gold medal in honor of the Filipino Veterans of
3 World War II, the gold medal shall be given to the
4 Smithsonian Institution, where it will be available
5 for display as appropriate and made available for re-
6 search.

7 (2) SENSE OF CONGRESS.—It is the sense of
8 Congress that the Smithsonian Institution should
9 make the gold medal received under paragraph (1)
10 available for display elsewhere, particularly at other
11 appropriate locations associated with the Filipino
12 Veterans of World War II.

13 (d) DUPLICATE MEDALS.—

14 (1) IN GENERAL.—Under regulations that the
15 Secretary may promulgate, the Secretary may strike
16 and sell duplicates in bronze of the gold medal
17 struck under this Act, at a price sufficient to cover
18 the costs of the medals, including labor, materials,
19 dies, use of machinery, and overhead expenses.

20 (2) SALE OF DUPLICATE MEDALS.—The
21 amounts received from the sale of duplicate medals
22 under paragraph (1) shall be deposited in the United
23 States Mint Public Enterprise Fund.

1 **SEC. 5. STATUS OF MEDALS.**

2 (a) NATIONAL MEDALS.—Medals struck under this
3 Act are national medals for purposes of chapter 51 of title
4 31, United States Code.

5 (b) NUMISMATIC ITEMS.—For purposes of section
6 5134 of title 31, United States Code, all medals struck
7 under this Act shall be considered to be numismatic items.

Passed the Senate July 13, 2016.

Attest:

Secretary.

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